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OPINIONS.

We are accustomed to regard freedom of opinion as a very sacred thing, and almost every man speaks of 'my opinions' as something which he bears in particular respect. 'I have a right to entertain what opinions I please,' is a phrase often heard; and perfect freedom in the publication of opinions is a principle of social polity which has been powerfully argued for, and embraced by a large section of educated humanity. But while the words opinion and opinions are of this importance with mankind, how strange it is to reflect on the very little pains which most men take to ascertain whether their opinions are well-founded or not! It is no uncharitable presumption, that probably not one man in a hundred ever seriously considers how far the opinions which he cherishes have a sound basis, or whether they are in reality anything but a series of impressions which have been made upon him, or of mere sentimental biases which he has insensibly contracted through the effect of circumstances in the course of his lifetime.

There can be no doubt that of the opinions of all men a vast portion have been received from others with little or no examination. We hear, in early years, persons whom we venerate expressing a particular set of opinions, and decrying or scoffing at those which are opposite. Respect for these persons, and a desire of possessing their approbation, are strong inducements to us to adopt their opinions, even should we not insensibly contract them from the mere frequency of their being impressed on our minds. Hearing little or nothing that is inconsistent with these prepossessions, we retain them from year to year, without ever dreaming that they possibly may be fallacious or ill-founded, or that the opposite set which we have been accustomed to hear decry may perhaps be, after all, the more correct. Nor, though we were to conceive that they ought to be examined, have all men the leisure or power of doing so. The consequence is, that the opinions which we have received from mere authority, which we have never examined, and do not suppose are in any need of examination, remain with us through life, ranking us in parties, governing the strain of our conversation, and operating in all the principal affairs of our lives. It may be reasonably asked, are opinions so acquired and so cherished entitled to any particular respect? Assuredly no one would think of modifying his actions from the dictates of any such opinions in another. Viewing them objectively in a fellow-creature, they only can appear as a set of crude hap-hazard ideas, which may be right or wrong, but bear no stamp to assure us of their being entitled to authority. Such opinions, therefore, are manifestly of no sort of value, and the arrogant and jealous terms in which they are

occasionally spoken of by those holding them, are simply ridiculous.

There is an equally large class of opinions which are merely reflexes of affections or sentiments of the mind, or the result of particular positions in which men are placed. A towering self-esteem, indisposing to all submission—a powerful benevolence and conscientiousness, eager to redress sufferings and wrongs—discontent with the personal circumstances assigned by providence—may be described as so many influences constantly at work to incline men to embrace the lower end of the scale of political opinions: these agencies more or less govern the intellect; they lead it in a particular path: it may battle for a time on the contrary side; but they are sure in the end to gain the ascendancy; and it finally submits to adopt that set of opinions in which alone it can be in harmony with those affections which it is doomed to accompany in the harness of life. The opposite class of political opinions are as frequently determined by the sentimental part of our nature—particularly by a veneration inclining to a submission to authority both of persons and dogmas. The whisperings of the feeling are mistaken for intellectual reasonings, and soon settle into the character of convictions. Positions from birth and fortune tell not less powerfully. He who has, at the wakening of existence, all the agreeable appliances which affluence and artificial distinction can confer, is naturally disposed by his personal feelings to adopt the opinions which tend to a securing and perpetuating of these advantages. He cannot readily suppose that to be bad generally, or in its ultimate operation, which is good in the meantime for one in whom he is so deeply interested; and we are so constituted, that even such inferior feelings will, if not carefully watched, become the foundations of opinions to which we shall cling as to the most sacred dictates of wisdom. He, on the other hand, who, with appetites and aspirations as strong, feels himself stunted and kept down by mean circumstances, is as much inclined by his personal sensations to form the opposite class of opinions. Sometimes, indeed, we see the tendencies of social circumstances not end in these results. There are peasant aristocrats, and aristocratic democrats; but these are only exceptions to the rule, and can generally be explained as depending on innate dispositions or chance conditions sufficiently strong to give an opposite bend. For example, Shelley the poet, who was the heir of a wealthy English baronetcy, derived from nature a humane disposition, which revolted at tyranny in all its shapes. It was roused by the antiquated systems of cruelty which he saw practised at school. He rebelled, was punished, became exasperated, fell out even with his relations, and from one thing went on to another, till he was a confirmed hater of all rule and authority whatever. Accidental contrasts or relations

often operate largely in engendering opinions. Burns, while a peasant amongst peasants, was a Tory; but when he was brought into contact with the great, and made to feel how vain was mere superiority of intellect against conventional distinction—when he walked in Edinburgh, and was bespattered and nearly ridden over by the carriage of an unthinking duchess—then he changed to a malcontent. This is but the type of a large class of cases; and were the simple swains of England to be all at once translated into the position of operatives in large manufacturing towns, some corresponding changes might be expected.

Interest and convenience also influence opinion to a great extent, or may even be said to be sources of it. Few men would admit this in their own case, and most are in a manner blind to the fact; but it is nevertheless true. When a man finds it either incompatible with an object which he deems important to retain opinions which he has formerly cherished, or necessary to that object to adopt other opinions which he had once disregarded or disliked, it is surprising how adroitly some occult power within will bring him about to the point, without in the least alarming his conscientiousness. The expedient most commonly adopted by this internal agent to reconcile us to a desertion, is to get up a little pique against some person identified with the opinions to be deserted. I differ from that man on some trivial point—I become irritated, and speak sharply—there is a retort, at which I fling off. My fidelity is then questioned—I feel indignant at the whole party—a little while sees me ranked on the other side, professing those opposite opinions which I had desired to adopt. The same result may be brought about by commencing with a sudden start at one of the measures, or new applications of the opinions, of the party, or by splitting with respect to some dogma which may be awakened up from its sleep for the purpose. In short, there never can be wanting some pretext for such a revolution, sufficient to pass muster with poor self-deceiving human nature. Cool'ry to adopt opinions previously rejected, is a more difficult task, but it is not in general beyond men's power. By giving to that side the benefit of every doubt, and treating the other uncandidly, it is possible, in a little time, to see things in the desired light. Handsome is that handsome does, and we naturally incline to think those abstractions good and beautiful, which are essentially connected with honour and profit. A little anger at objections helps the process wonderfully, and if to this be added a notion that the new opinions are the best for the public interest, the matter is settled.

Such, unquestionably, are the ways in which men become possessed of a large proportion of their opinions. They call them their sentiments—'I will give you my sentiments on the subject.' Well may they use the term; for, in nine out of ten cases, their feelings, and not their judgment, are concerned. Is there, then, any importance to be attached to all this mass of thought? Is it entitled to the respect which is claimed for it? These questions cannot be answered in monosyllables.

The subject must be regarded in two divisions. Considered collectively, we are forced to receive the opinions of mankind, such as they are, with respect, for there is no other guide for all common affairs. There may be vast and pernicious error, but we cannot help it for the time. Let every means be taken to extinguish the error, and introduce truth in its stead; but still we must meanwhile submit to the general dictate as it has been given forth. Very differently, however, may the opinions of an individual be regarded. Here we are clearly at liberty to inquire how these have originated, and to consider the general intellectual grade of the man, so as to judge of his power of forming sound opinions. If he is a mere impulsive being, inspired with another man's breath, actuated solely by his feelings and interests, and who has never taken any pains to ascertain the soundness or fallacy of any of his thoughts, all his self-complacent talk about his opinions on this and that subject ought to pass for only so much empty air. On

the other hand, where we find a free and active intellect in union with a respectable moral nature, the opinions of the individual must be entitled to respectful attention, and ought to have their due sway in the determination of affairs in which he is a party concerned.

It is not given to all men to possess the clear and vigorous judgment which is the most likely to give soundness to their opinions; but all men have it, nevertheless, in their power to give them some degree of correctness and value. The first duty is to look searchingly and challengingly into all those already stored up, with a view to testing their accuracy, and to be prepared to abandon those which shall appear fallacious, however endeared they may be to us from habit and association; trusting fully in the maxim, that nothing which is not true can be good. A second duty is to watch carefully over the feelings, especially all which relate to sordid views of interest, so as to prevent them from corrupting judgment. When any man is sure in his conscience that he has done all which his nature permits thus to secure right views of abstract questions, he may be considered as entitled to bring his opinions before his fellow-creatures, to be listened to and allowed their fair share of influence—but not, I humbly conceive, till then.

THE WEDDING.

A BACKWOOD SKETCH.

DURING a residence in America, no observing person can fail to have remarked, whether he travel in Canada, the United States, or Texas, the vast number of Irish families everywhere to be met with. They bear such distinctly-marked peculiarities, that no mistake can occur in attributing to them their native soil. It has been my lot to visit many of the settlements of these wanderers from the green isle; but nowhere did I meet any family which so singularly interested me, as one which a few months back was residing within the limits of the young republic of Texas, consisting of the father, mother, a son, and two daughters. Old Rock, or, as he is generally called, Captain Rock—a name doubtless assumed—emigrated to America seventeen years ago—his family then consisting of two daughters; for the son was born afterwards in the land of his adoption. For seven years, the sturdy Irishman (originally well informed and well educated, though his early history was never known) contended with the difficulties incident to new settlers, with various success, in different parts of the Union, when he was induced to join the first band of adventurers who, under General Austen, obtained leave from the Mexican government to locate themselves in Texas. The family obtained a grant of land as a matter of course; but old Rock did not fancy settled agricultural pursuits. To have round him a well-stocked farm, cleared and productive fields, and herds of cattle, would have required a degree of perseverance and patient personal labour of which he was incapable. He preferred the life of a wandering squatter, upon which he at once entered, and which he has never since deserted. Building a boat, old Rock embarked in it on one of the Texian rivers, with his family, an old gun, and a small stock of ammunition, and, following the windings of the stream, did not stop until he came to an abandoned log-hut, or frame-house, where he thought he might find temporary accommodation.

Of these deserted houses Texas has many, their abundance arising from various causes—death from fever, the terrible civil war, or, oftener still, from men having hastily chosen a location, and built thereon, before it was found out that the spot was undesirable and unproductive. Rock was not nice. If the neighbourhood supplied game, he was satisfied. Sometimes an acre of sweet potatoes, Indian corn, and pumpkins, might be set under cultivation; otherwise, the family lived entirely upon venison, wild fowl, fish and oysters, and, it was whispered, pork upon occasion. A reported fondness for this latter article was one of the causes of old

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Rock's frequent migrations. No sooner did he pitch himself in any neighbourhood, than, it was said, pork was at a premium. Pigs certainly disappeared most mysteriously; but though all threw the blame upon Rock, he ever averred the panthers, wolves, and stray hunters, to have been the real culprits. However this might be, after some months' residence in any particular spot, the family usually received a polite notice to quit, and find another dwelling-place. Eighteen several times had the Hibernian patriarch removed his tent at the bidding of his fellows; any neglect of such orders being usually followed by the infliction of that summary justice called Lynch law.

When I became acquainted with the family, early in the autumn of 1842, they were residing on one of the tributaries which pour into Galveston bay—known as Dick's Creek. The son was sixteen, a small-made lad, who entirely supported the family by means of his gun, being one of the most expert hunters I ever met with in the backwoods. Every article not produced by themselves—their clothing being entirely of deerskin—was obtained by bartering venison hams, which they always carefully preserved for this purpose. Rock and his wife were now old; the former, though yet sturdy, moving about only in his boat, and smoking over his fire; the latter doing all the cooking. Mary and Betsy Rock, the daughters, it would be vain to attempt faithfully to delineate. Fat, brown, and healthy, dressed in petticoats and spencers of deerskin, they were the most original pair it was ever my lot to encounter. They could neither read nor write, but could hunt and fish most excellently well: and two adventurous days they were that I spent in their company. They had never seen an Englishman before since they were grown up, and my pictures of life at home enraptured them. With the younger daughter, Mary—the other was engaged to be married to a Yankee—I became a prodigious favourite, and many a hunt in canoe and in the prairie had we together. But to my story. After leaving them with a faithful promise of paying another visit, I found myself, six weeks after, again at the door of the once elegant frame-house where I had left them. To my surprise it was half-burnt and desolate. This disappointed me much; for I had brought up several appropriate presents for both my young friends. Pursuing my way, however, up the river, I halted at a farm-house, where I found several persons collected, who quickly informed me that the family had been 'mobbed' off the creek, with threats of being shot if they settled within ten miles of the spot. Where they had gone to no one knew, nor seemed to care; and these parties being the very extempore administrators of justice who had warned them off, I soon departed, and gained the house of my friend Captain Tod, where I purposed ruralising during some weeks. From Tod I learned that two fat pigs had lately disappeared; and suspicion most unjustly, as it afterwards turned out, having fallen on the Rocks, the squatter and his family had to seek a new resting-place. On hearing this, I gave up all idea of ever again seeing my fair friends.

Three days passed in the usual occupations of a hunting party, when, on the afternoon of the fourth day, I was left alone in the log-hut to amuse myself over certain lately arrived English papers, while my companions were employed in searching the country round for some cattle which my friend the captain was desirous of selling. About an hour before sunset, footsteps, which I supposed to be those of one of the returning party of cowboys, were heard behind the hut, then at its side, and in a minute more the latch was raised, and in walked—Tim Rock. The young hunter, having satisfied himself that I was really there, advanced close to me, and answered my greetings. My first inquiries were after his sisters. 'Why,' said he, 'sister Bet is to be married to-morrow, and sister Mary has sent me to invite you to the wedding.' 'How,' said I, in some surprise, 'did your sister know I was here?' Tim laughed, and replied that when I stopped with my boat's crew at the farm-house,

he was on the opposite bank in the big timber hunting, but dared not communicate with me in consequence of what had occurred. After a few more words of explanation, I shouldered my gun, my packet of presents for the young ladies, and, leaving a line in pencil for my friends, followed Tim through the forest, until we reached the water's-edge, where, carefully concealed by overhanging trees and bushes, I found a moderate-sized canoe. It was almost dark when I stepped into the boat, but still I saw that it already contained a human being; so my hand mechanically sought the butt of my pistol. 'You won't shoot me, sir,' said the rich full merry voice of Mary Rock to my infinite surprise. Tim laughed heartily at my mistaking her for an Indian, and then, cautioning me to speak low, until all the houses on the river were passed, we placed ourselves in the craft, and commenced our voyage. I, knowing the bayou to be a nicety, acted as steersman. Mary sat next with a paddle, and Tim in the bows with another. It seemed that, determined to have me at the wedding, the brother and sister, with the consent of their friends, had started to fetch me, feeling certain that I would come, after the promises I had made to that effect. It seemed that they had judged rightly; for here was I, in company with two of the rudest settlers in the wilderness, embarked in a frail canoe to go I knew not whither—nor did I much care. This roving spirit it was, indeed, which initiated me into many secrets and mysteries of the woods and prairies which escape the more sober and methodical.

The record of that night's journey would in itself be a curious chapter in western economy; but more important matters forbid. Suffice it to remark, that, after sixteen miles' journey down a river by moonlight, and as many more across the rough and sea-like bay of Galveston, enlivened by merry jocular talk all the way, we arrived about dawn at the new settlement of the Rock family. It was a large deserted barn or warehouse near Clare Creek. The family were already up and stirring, and engaged in active preparation for the important ceremony; and, to my surprise, the supply of eatables and drinkables was both varied and great—all, however, being presents from the bridegroom, one Luke, a wealthy landowner for Texas, in possession of much cleared ground, and many hundred head of cattle. It may be matter of surprise that a man well to do in the world should have chosen a bride so every way rude and uneducated; but in Texas women are scarce, and then the lover might have looked far before he could have found a more cheerful and good-natured companion, more willing to learn, more likely to be loving, faithful, and true, than Betsy Rock. The blushing bride received me in a cotton gown, shoes and stockings, and other articles of civilised clothing previously unknown to her, and in which she felt sufficiently awkward. But Luke had sent them, and Betsy wished to appear somebody on her wedding day. My presents were all, therefore, except a head-necklace, employed in decorating Mary, who, secreting herself behind a screen with her sister, almost convulsed me with laughter by appearing a few minutes after in a man's red hunting-shirt, a cotton petticoat, white stockings and moccasins, the body of a silk dress sent to her by a Galveston lady, and a cap and bonnet. Never was London or Parisian belle prouder than was this little rosy-cheeked light-hearted Texian beauty.

About eight o'clock the visitors began to arrive. First came a boatful of men and women from Galveston, bringing with them a negro fiddler, without whom little could have been done. Then came Dr Worcester and his lady from St Leon in a canoe; after them Colonel Brown from Anahuac in his *dog-out*; and, about nine, the bridegroom and four male and an equal number of female companions on horseback, the ladies riding either before or behind the gentlemen on pillion. Ere ten, there were thirty odd persons assembled, when a most substantial breakfast was sat down to, chiefly consisting of game, though pork, beef, coffee, and, rarer still, bread,

proved that Luke had had a hand in it. This meal being over, the boat in which the party from Galveston had come up, and which was an open craft for sailing or pulling, was put in requisition to convey the bride and bridegroom to the nearest magistrate, there to plight their troth. The distance to be run was six miles with a fair wind going, but dead against us on our return. The party consisted of Luke, who was a young man of powerful frame, but rather unpleasant features; the bride and bride's-maid (Mary Rock officiating in this capacity), papa of course, myself as captain, and eight men to pull us back. The breeze was fresh, the craft a smart sailer, the canvass was rap full, and all therefore being in our favour, we reached West Point, the residence of Mr Parr, the magistrate, in less than an hour. We found our Texian Solon about to start in chase of a herd of deer, just reported by his son as visible, and being therefore in a hurry, the necessary formalities were gone through, the fee paid, and the usual document in the possession of the husband in ten minutes. The eye of the old squatter was moistened as he gave his child away; some natural tears *she* shed, but dried them soon; and presently everybody was as merry as ever.

No sooner were the formalities concluded, than we returned to the boat, and to our great delight found that, close hauled, we could almost make the desired spot. The wind had shifted a point, and ere ten minutes, we were again clean full, the tide with us, and the boat walking the waters at a noble rate. All looked upon this as a good omen, and were proportionately merrier; none more so than my own particular friend Mary, who, in her finery, was an object of much good-humoured joking from the men who surrounded her. About one o'clock Mr and Mrs Charles Luke were presented by old Rock to the assembled company at the barn; and, after an embrace from her mother, the bride led the way, accompanied by her lord and master, to the dinner table. The woods, prairies, and waters, as well as the Galveston market, had all liberally contributed their share of provender. Wild turkeys, ducks, geese, haunches of venison, were displayed, beside roast-beef, pork, red-fish, Irish and sweet potatoes, pumpkin and apple pie, and an abundant supply of whisky, brandy, and Hollands, without which a *fete* in Texas is nothing thought of. An hour was consumed in eating and drinking, when Sambo was summoned to take his share in the day's proceedings. Tables, such as they were, were cleared away, the floor swept, partners chosen, and, despite the remonstrance of one of the faculty present, Dr Worcester, against dancing so shortly after a heavy meal, all present, the dissident included, began to foot it most nimbly. Never was there seen such dancing since the world began, never such laughing, such screaming, such fiddling. Every one took off shoes and stockings. I was compelled to do so, to save the toes of my especial partner, Mary; and to the rapid music of the old negro, reels and country dances were rattled off at a most surprising rate. All talked, and joked, and laughed, such couples as were tired retreating to seek refreshment; but the dancing never ceasing, except at rare intervals, when Sambo gave in from sheer fatigue and thirst. Such was the state of things until about nine o'clock, when a sudden diminution in our number was noticed by all present. Mary had before let me into the secret; and the bride and bridegroom were missed, as well as the four couples who had accompanied Luke. Rushing into the open air, we descried the husband and wife on their fine black horse galloping beneath the pale moon across the prairie, escorted by their friends. A loud shout was given them, and those who remained, returned to the house to renew the dancing, which was kept up until a late hour. It was four days after my departure ere I regained my companions at Todville.

Such was the wedding of one of those hardy pioneers of civilisation, whose descendants may yet be members of a great and powerful nation. I saw Luke and his wife, as well as Mary, on many subsequent occasions; but I never learned that the American backwoodsman

repented his union with the wild Irish Diana, who had hunted deer on Murtany island with the English stranger, could paddle a canoe with more ease than she could use a needle, and shoot a duck with more facility than write her name. Luke, however, is teaching her more useful accomplishments; and Betsy, ere her children—one of whom I have already seen—are of an age to require instruction, will doubtless be able to render it. I hope, however, my picture will send over no one to wed Mary; for, though I have for the meantime returned to civilisation, I cannot yet resign a certain faint notion, that there might be worse lives than that of a Texian settler with such an associate.

MAJOR HARRIS'S EXPEDITION TO THE HIGHLANDS OF ETHIOPIA.

LITTLE certain knowledge had reached us respecting the large tract of country usually called the Highlands of Ethiopia, when the British government was induced a few years ago to send an embassy to it, for the purpose of establishing commercial relations. Our ignorance of this country was the more remarkable, considering that its people, in common with their neighbours of Abyssinia, have long been professors of a form of Christianity. The work recently published by Major Harris* makes us for the first time tolerably acquainted with the country and its people.

The ambassador—if the term can properly be applied in such a case—experienced great difficulties and dangers in his approach to the object of his mission. Leaving Tajura with a small European escort, and a large and very troublesome native one, a string of 170 camels, bearing presents to the king, as well as the personal baggage of the embassy, the first and most extraordinary stage of suffering was that experienced in the Bahr Assal, 'an unventilated and diabolical hollow,' 570 feet below the ocean, where no zephyr fanned the skin, and where the glare from a plain of white salt, which formed the greater portion of its lower level, destroyed the eyesight, while a furnace-like vapour created an indomitable thirst, the thermometer under the shade of cloaks and umbrellas being 126 degrees. After nearly two months of this distressing journey, during which two Europeans sank under the dangers of banditti, after being robbed by foes, and cheated and deceived by pretended friends, the embassy at length, weary and forlorn, and yet full of hope for the future, arrived at the foot of the Abyssinian alps, when, 'as if by the touch of the magician's wand, the scene changed from parched and arid wastes to a series of green and lovely elevated grounds, presenting one sheet of rich and thriving cultivation. Each fertile knoll is crowned with its peaceful hamlet, each rural vale traversed by its crystal brook, and teeming with herds and flocks. The cool mountain zephyr is redolent of eglantine and jasmine, and the soft green turf, spangled with clover, daisies, and buttercups, yields at every step the aromatic fragrance of mint and thyme.' The camels were now eased of their loads, which were transferred to the shoulders of 600 Moslem porters, accompanied by whom the embassy advanced by a rough and stony road over hill and dale, amid shady lanes of wild-rose, fern, lantana, and honeysuckle, greeted at every step by the wondering glances of the Shoa peasants, and merry groups of hooded women, decked in scarlet and crimson. A brief journey brought them to Alio Amba, where Major Harris and his suite were again doomed to suffer manifold inconveniences, arising in this instance from the jealousy and curiosity of those in office, from wretched accommodation and provisions, pelting rain, filthy habitations, and other ills too numerous to mention. This principally arose from a habit which exists in Shoa, of the king's keeping all embassies a long time in waiting, to enhance the

* The Highlands of Ethiopia. By Major W. C. Harris. Three volumes. London: Longmans and Co.

honour of the reception at length granted. Unfortunately, too, the king's curiosity with regard to the presents, which at first had been great, was on the decline, from hearing of the contents of one box which the prying eyes of his satellites had searched, and which only consisted of the leathern buckles, lynch-stocks, and ash staves pertaining to a chariot designed for his majesty. A few days of most tiresome delay at Alio Amba enabled Major Harris to witness a market-day in Shoa. 'Honey, cotton, grain, and other articles of consumption, the produce of the estate of the Amhara farmer, are exposed for sale or barter. The Dankali merchant exhibits his gay assortment of beads, metals, coloured thread, and glass-ware. The wild Galla squats beside the produce of his flocks, and the Moslem trader from the interior displays ostrich feathers, or some other article of curiosity from the distant tribe. Bales of cotton cloth, and bags of coffee from Caffa and Enárea, are strewn in every direction.' Women, unrestricted by any harem law, wander about also buying and selling; but, according to Major Harris, very little to the enhancement of the charms of the place, nature having been very unkind to the softer sex in this country.

At length, his curiosity being no longer able to restrain itself within bounds, the king of Shoa gave notice that he would receive the embassy at his palace of Machal-Wana, a beautifully situated building, with conical white roofs, embosomed in a grove of juniper and cypress, which crested a beautifully wooded tumulus rising at the extreme verge of a valley from the very banks of a roaring torrent. After a host of petty difficulties, which Major Harris treats with contempt, but which show the uncivilised nature of their hosts, the British party, radiant with plumes and gold embroidery, under the roar of artillery—six discharges to the minute—rode up to the palace, surrounded by an astonished and bewildered crowd, and were received by his majesty. Persian carpets, and rugs of all sizes, colours, and patterns, covered the floor of the reception room; two wide alcoves receded on either side, in one of which blazed a cheerful wood fire, engrossed by indolent cats; whilst in the other, on a flowered satin ottoman, surrounded by withered eunuchs and juvenile pages of honour, and supported by gay velvet cushions, a harem of five hundred wives—still more orientalising his character—reclined, in Ethiopic state, His Most Christian Majesty Sähela Selassie, attired in a silken Arab vest of green brocade, partially shrouded under the ample folds of a white cotton robe of Abyssinian manufacture, adorned with sundry broad crimson stripes and borders. Forty summers had slightly furrowed his dark brow, and somewhat grizzled a full bushy head of hair; and though the loss of his left eye took much from his appearance, the expression of his features was rather manly and pleasing. Compliments being exchanged, the costly presents of the British were displayed to the glistening eyes of the monarch, rich Brussels carpets, cashmere shawls, Delhi scarfs, jewellery, ornamental clocks, musical boxes, and, more welcome than all, three hundred muskets, and the despised chariot, now converted into an object of universal admiration. 'God will reward you,' exclaimed the king, 'for I cannot.'

Sähela Selassie, 'the Clemency of the Trinity,' seventh king of Shoa, whose surname is Menilek, was twelve years of age when the assassination of Woosen Suggud called him from a monastery to the throne, and placed in his hands the reins of despotic government over a wild Christian nation. His character appears a singular compound of good and evil; avaricious, suspicious, deceitful, and superstitious; yet are his faults tinged by amiable and excellent qualities. Grateful as the king was for the magnificent presents conferred on him, and though, showing the most unreserved confidence in Major Harris, who was assailed by every inimical influence which the intolerant bigotry of an ignorant priesthood and an interested train of courtiers could invent, yet was Sähela Selassie never satisfied, always craving for something new. On the other

hand, the monarch, at the earnest and humane solicitation of our ambassador, abolished the custom of imprisoning every relative of the crown whose ambition might be feared, and released seven princes from a long and wearisome captivity. During the morning of every day, Sunday and Saturday excepted, this half-civilised prince is engaged in public affairs, trying appeals, and deciding suits; after the performance of his morning devotions, he inspects his stables and workshops, bestows charity, despatches couriers, and gives private audiences. Every one, rich or poor, has a right to present himself with suits and appeals, to all which Sähela Selassie listens with attention, giving prompt, and generally correct judgment. At three, the king of Shoa dines alone; and no sooner is he satisfied, than the doors are thrown open, and the long table is crowded with warriors. Music enlivens the repast, as well as songs in praise of the sovereign's liberality, who, meanwhile, reads and dictates letters, while the board is thrice replenished, and all the aristocracy have dined. At five he retires to the private apartments, where prayers and potent liquors fill up the evening hours, partly with company, and partly without. At midnight his majesty is called from his couch to peruse psalms and sacred writings; and priests chant hymns all the night to keep away evil spirits, until morn, when the same scene recommences. Sometimes, when business allows, and the sky is propitious, an excursion takes place on horseback, when, accompanied by some four or five hundred warriors, he alights, and, sitting for hours on the edge of some quiet and sequestered brook, listens to the soft music of the waters, conversing meanwhile with those around, watching the evolutions of his horses, and even hearing and deciding on petitions. Sähela Selassie, in remembrance of the fate of his murdered father, never moves without a concealed and loaded pistol; well paid and trusty warriors surround his couch at night; the gates of the palace are barred after the going down of the sun, and stoutly guarded during the night. From both religious and worldly motives, King Selassie entertains vast bodies of pensioners, who receive, some rations of bread, and others even of meat, the greatest luxury of the land. The king is in high favour with his fanatical clergy, from the fact of his making munificent donations to churches and monasteries, and never carrying out any project without previously consulting them. The Jewish Christianity of these priests, their extraordinary customs, fasts, prophecies, rites, &c. are described at full length in the volumes before us. The king also, as far as in him lies, encourages letters, and spends much money in the collection of ancient manuscripts.

One of Sähela Selassie's principal sources of revenue—in this the semi-barbarian has many other more civilised Christian monarchs to keep him in countenance—is the tax on slaves, one in every ten becoming his property, besides his having a right of pre-emption on all. Four pieces of salt—this article in oblong lumps is the principal money—is also levied as a transit duty; and as from fifteen to twenty thousand annually pass through his dominions on their way to the coast, the revenue which accrues is valued at about L.800 sterling. The king's own household slaves, male and female, exceed eight thousand; of the latter three hundred are in the royal harem. The remainder are employed in various servile offices, and they each receive a portion of barley sufficient to compose two loaves. Beyond this they must maintain themselves. After having performed their allotted tasks, therefore, they hire themselves for wages to private individuals. Slavery is hereditary, not only on the mother's side, but on the father's; and if a free woman weds a slave, her progeny become the property of her husband's master. On the subject of the slave-trade we have details brought before us by Major Harris of a fearful kind; but it is pleasing to think that there is some prospect of a diminution of these evils, from the increase of commercial intercourse with more civilised nations. The treaty of commerce effected by Major

Harris may be regarded as one important step towards the local extinction of this accursed traffic.

The natives of the Ethiopian Highlands, or Amhara, as they are called, have regular Caucasian features and long glossy hair, united to a complexion varying from the darkest dye of the negro to a species of brown or olive. The observer is struck by the tall, robust, and manly contour of the males, and of the females also, though in a slightly less degree. Beauty is not entirely denied to these black ladies; but comeliness only occurs as an exception, while every artificial means is resorted to to render the human face more hideous than nature has willed it to be. The frightful paint of the Red Indians, the terrible scarification of the New Zealanders, are, in their eyes, additions to their natural beauty; and with the Amhara damsel of Southern Abyssinia, the eradication of the eyebrows, followed by painting a deep narrow curved line in their stead with a strong permanent blue dye, is the favourite toilet. A mash of red ochre and fat on the cheeks, though highly esteemed, can only be resorted to by the rich, on account of the expense; and when the head is not shaved, or surrounded by a greasy rag, it is ornamented by elaborate rows of curls, plastered with stale butter. Below the neck commences a wide sack chemise, with huge sleeves, bound round the waist by a girdle, and surmounted by a 'long winding-sheet' thrown over the head. On ordinary occasions, large black wooden studs are worn in the ear, which on gala days are replaced by masses of silver or pewter, which, aided by bracelets and anklets of the same metals, cause the fair ones to emit sounds only to be understood by those who have witnessed the dance of the Ojibbeway Indians. Beads blue and gilt, a potent collection of amulets, feet and hands dyed red by a root, the nostrils plugged up with lemon peel or some aromatic herb, with a bouquet hanging over the mouth, such is the finished costume of a lady of rank. With the men, the dress, from the king to the peasant, consists of a loose web of coarse cotton cloth, wrapping the entire body in graceful folds. A cotton waist-cloth of many yards in length is swathed about the loins, and loose trousers hang nearly to the knee. A shield, spear, and sword, the latter very Hudibrasian, since it serves equally at the banquet and in the field, are the national weapons. The raw fleece of the sheep envelops the form of the serf, while during a journey or a foray, the prepared skin of the ocelot, or leopard, is thrown over the shoulders of the better classes. All are alike in one thing, from the king to the beggar, no one wearing shoes; neither is the head covered, save amongst the priests. The same amount of amulets and rings which are so conspicuous in the women, also adorn the men. Being as yet without razors—though the treaty of commerce with England will soon send our cutlery amongst them—the men denude their unwashed cheeks and chin with bad scissors. Water, tobacco, and coffee, are carefully avoided as Moslem abominations, the Christian being content to rub his eyes in the morning with the corner of his discoloured robe; the hair, however, commands his serious attention. Many hours are spent in arranging the abundant mop. At one time it is worn hanging in long clustering ringlets, at another frizzed into round globules, then brushed and trimmed like a counsellor's peruke, and now divided into four large compartments, invariably shining under the effect of rancid butter. A lump of raw fat, cut from the overgrown tail of the Berbera sheep, having been some time masticated, is put into the hands, rubbed in the palms, and then planted on the crown; the sun completes the toilet, causing the liquid tallow, mixed with dirt, to trickle over the face and neck. Many cannot afford this luxury; or, their intention failing them, they eat the morsel destined for the head. Black or yellow garments, or ordinary apparel steeped in mud, is the usual mourning. A small cord, called *mateb*, of deep blue silk, is the badge of Christianity. The Amhara have no family name. They soon ripen, and as soon grow old. Girls

are mothers at twelve, and are old proportionably soon. Their houses, built as in the earliest days, are still a mere framework of stake, sparingly bedaubed with mud. So flimsy are the materials employed, that, as Major Harris says, 'the morning sun often rises a witness to the truth of the scriptural metaphor—"He built his house upon the sand, and it was swept away by the rising flood."' The windows are mere perforations in the wall, furnished with shutters, but unprovided with any transparent substance. Artificial heat is of course required, where the thermometer never ranges above 65 degrees; but, except through the crevices in the door, and the apertures of the cracked walls, there is no exit for the smoke of the wood fire, which thus fills the solitary apartment, blackening the roof, and injuring the eyes. The most slovenly appearance pervades the dreary interior. Furniture is limited to a small wicker table, a bullock hide, and a rickety bedstead. Sewers being unknown, the buildings have around them stagnant pools of most unaromatic character. Poultry, mules, farm stock, and inhabitants, reside under the same roof; and with all this, of course, sickness is abundant.

Morality among these Christians of Shoa is at a low ebb: marriage is not here the holy tie which binds society together. A girl is valued expressly according to her property: the heiress to a house, field, or bedstead, is sure of a husband. No distinction is made between legitimate and illegitimate children. All conjugal affection is lost sight of, and each woman is in turn cast aside in neglect. The bulk of the nation is agricultural; but, on pain of a fine of twenty pieces of salt, value twenty-pence, every Christian in Shoa must obey a summons to the field. A small bribe of cloth or honey will generally insure leave of absence; but the people are mostly eager for the fray, in hope of plunder. The great men not employed as governors spend their time basking listlessly in the sun, gossiping, lounging about the court, or playing at *gebbeta*, a kind of backgammon, or *shunbridge*, chess; the women managing the house, the slaves and servants the farm. Visits are made early, taking care not to drop in at meal times, as you are then supposed to invite yourself to partake. Idle attendants crowd round every principal man; a crying nuisance, especially when these noblemen honour a stranger by a visit, as all his attendants follow him. Respect is paid by a humiliating prostration to the earth, and the partial disrobing of the person.

Meals are eaten twice a-day, at noon and after sunset. The doors are first carefully barred, to exclude the evil eye, and a fire is lighted, ere an Amhara will venture to taste a mouthful. Men and women sit down together, picking out from one dish the choicest bits, which, at arm's length, they thrust into each other's mouth, wiping their fingers on the pancakes, which serve as platters, and are afterwards devoured by the domestics. Raw flesh is the chief aliment, cooking being held in sovereign contempt. The bull is cast down at the door, the head severed from the body, and no sooner is the breath gone, than the warm raw flesh is handed to the banquet. Sour bread, made from tef, barley, and wheat, is eaten with a stimulating potage of onions, red pepper, and salt. Mead formed the famous beverage of all northern nations. In Shoa, the king alone retains the right to prepare this beverage. Unless brewed with the greatest care, it possesses a sweet mawkish flavour; but its powers of intoxication—with the additional inducement of producing no after-feelings—is irresistible to the Amhara of rank, who rarely goes to bed sober. It is compounded of the *gesho* plant, honey and water, chillies and pepper, and when kept thirty years, as some is in the king's cellars, is as strong as brandy. The common beer of the country, very like soap and water in look, is also very strong, and drunk in vast quantities by the Abyssinians, with its usual effects in scenes of violence. When not engaged in a debauch, the Abyssinian goes to bed at sunset. The clothing of the day forms the night covering;

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and should the master of the house feel hungry, a collop of raw flesh, and a horn of ale, is proffered by a male or female attendant, who starts without apparel from the group of sleepers. Coffee is strictly forbidden, as well as smoking, 'because the apostle saith that which cometh out of the mouth of a man defileth him.' Meat is forbidden during one half the year (spent in fasting), as well as eggs, butter, and milk. A scanty mess of boiled wheat, dried peas, or hard cabbage, with a little vegetable oil, is the only fare allowed at that time. From the highest to the lowest, all classes are pertinacious beggars. Whatever is seen, is demanded—guns, knives, scissors, beads, and dollars. No compunction is felt in asking for the cloak from off the back, or in carrying it away during a pitiless storm. The Amhara takes a pride in this, and boasts that a child, before he comes into the world, will stretch forth his hand to receive a gift.

All the customs of Abyssinia are at variance with the creation, consumption, and distribution of wealth. A heavy taxation is levied on the fields. Monastic establishments crush the people. Here are no roads or bridges to facilitate commerce—no schools, no education. Husbandry is conducted without the advantage of any skill; and yet, such is the kindness of nature, the produce is immensely abundant. As soon as the periodical rains have passed, pastures and meadows are clothed in cheering green, the hills and dales are adorned with myriads of beautiful and sweet-scented flowers, and the sides of the mountain-ranges become one sheet of the most luxuriant vegetation. Forty-three species of grain and other useful products are already cultivated in Abyssinia; and 'if only,' says Major Harris, 'a small portion of European knowledge were to be instilled into the mind of the Christian cultivator, the kingdom of Shoa, possessed of such unbounded advantages, might be rapidly raised from its present primitive condition, and made one inexhaustible granary for all the best fruits of the earth.'

RIGA ROBBIE.

In the course of last summer, while journeying through one of the northern counties of Scotland, I was happy to rest for the night in a village that I had known many years ago, and which I may speak of under the name of Port-Marly. It is a little sea-port on the east coast, possessing a small but safe harbour facing the German Ocean.

When I formerly visited Port-Marly, it was poor, and scarcely known beyond its own immediate neighbourhood. Being picturesquely situated, like most of our old towns and villages, at the confluence of a small stream with the sea, the houses were erected irregularly along the steep bank of the rivulet, and were of all shapes and sizes—here tolerably large, with a slip of garden or flower-plot in front, marking the residence of a person of superior means; there small and abutting on the street; sometimes slated, sometimes tiled or thatched, with antique little windows on the roof, to give light to a garret storey, or entrance to pigeons, the favourites of the juvenile part of the community. At one particular point in the village the stream was seen hurrying through an open space, called the green, which, serving for ornament and use, might have been called the great square of the village. To those who knew Scotland half a century ago, it need hardly be told, that the road to Port-Marly was full of all sorts of irregularities and bends, more picturesque than suitable for draught, and that the village itself usually presented a scene of perfect quiet and dulness. Had a traveller passed through it, possibly the only inhabitant who would have met his eye would have been the half-employed tailor, airing himself for a space at the end of a projecting cottage overlooking the harbour, or a barefooted lass spreading out her washing of clothes on the village green.

Things might have gone on in this quiet, and no doubt primitive way, for ages longer, but for a particular circumstance. About the year 1790, a working man of plain appearance, by name Robert Rennie, settled in the village. No one knew distinctly whence he came, or anything of his genealogy or connexions, and as he was not by any means talkative, but of a thoughtful disposition, the curiosity of the villagers to learn the particulars of his history, supposing them to have had any curiosity on the subject, was not at least for the present gratified. Port-Marly, as Robert Rennie soon discovered, did not afford sufficient scope for his industry; and not feeling inclined to dawdle out existence within its humble precincts, he very wisely resolved to carry his labour to a more profitable market. Robert accordingly emigrated farther south to a stirring manufacturing town, where his employment was better. Here he remained some time in the establishment of a person who gave work to a considerable number of hands; and here he at least contrived to improve his mind by reading, if he did not improve his circumstances. To attain the latter object was not, indeed, easy; for he was already married, and had other mouths to feed, and backs to clothe, besides his own. But his mind was no more at rest than his hands, and he at length devised a scheme of not only personal, but public advantage. Port-Marly, he reflected, possessed wonderful capacities as a manufacturing town, which only required to be brought into play. It possessed a fine water-power: its inhabitants were not half employed, and could be set to labour at little cost: the port was good, and formed a ready means of inlet and outlet: in short, he decided it was the very spot where a manufacture would thrive, or a dealer in rural produce prosper, provided the enterprises were properly set about.

While all this was clear, it was also certain that the contriver of the scheme had not a shilling. He possessed, however, what is generally better than money, a good character, which he had earned by diligence in a situation of inferior trust given to him by his employer, a man of liberal mind and dealings. He had even earned a degree of gratitude from his master. On one occasion, he was the means of discovering and arresting a system of petty pilfering of materials, by which considerable loss was saved to the concern. Encouraged by the favourable notice which had been taken of his discernment and honesty in this affair, Robert broached the idea of setting up a small business of his own at Port-Marly, if Mr ——— would stand his friend. After a few consultations, Mr ——— promised to be security for a small credit, and with much kindness induced another party to be equally generous. On their joint responsibility, a credit was opened with a foreign house for flax, and our hero, as we may call him, returned to Port-Marly to enter on his undertaking. This he designed to do cautiously and economically. He had seen enough of the world to know that all great and flourishing concerns begin in a small way, as a lofty tree grows from a small and insignificant-looking seed. Prudently, therefore, did he commence operations in an old house rented for the purpose, without any external pretension or show. It may well be supposed, however, that he was a proud man when the *Lively Nancy*, a small schooner, entered the harbour of Port-Marly laden with the first cargo of flax from Riga, for his manufacture; and well he might feel elated, when he saw the sensation which the great event produced in the hitherto tranquil community. Nearly the whole population came down to the beach, or stood at gaze at their doors to witness the singular spectacle. Boys shouted and hurried; young men had great anticipations of what was to be done; and old men with bent spines and hands in pocket prophetically shook their cowed heads over the agitating events of the day.

'Wonderfu' times, neighbour Johnston; wonderfu' times. The Port's going to be a grand town at last. I wish we may live to see't.'

'I'm no sae sure, Sandy, about the upshot o' this

great importation. Naeboddy kens where Robbie has gotten a' the siller to carry on in this kind o' way. In my opinion it should be looked to. What say ye til't, Tammie Norie?

'Deed,' replied the worthy here addressed, 'I cannot but think it will turn out a daft business a'thegither; and that I said to the minister, honest man, when he was speerin' about Robbie's projects.'

'And weel, Tammie, what said the minister? he, to be sure, should aye ken best.'

'Houts, he just took a snuff, and said, Tammas, said he—Tammas, you know we should not judge folk hurriedly. Maybe he means weel, and will pay weel; and besides, said he, Robbie has brought a line frae Dr McCosh, said he, and has taen a seat in the kirk for himself and his family. That looks weel at ony rate, said he.'

'And I'm thinking the minister has the right end of the story,' observed a younger member of the corps. 'Robbie is an auld farrant chield, and kens what he is about. He has spoken to my lassie, Tibby, to work at the lint, and she's to have half-a-crown a-week. It would ha been lang to the day ere she could hae gotten that in the Port frae onybody else.'

Such was the gossip of the village oracles on the mighty occasion when Rennie introduced his first cargo of raw material to be dressed and spun by the hitherto uncommercial population of Port-Marly. Under the direction of some skilled operatives, various youngsters were initiated in the flax-dressing business; and in a short time the infant factory was in full employment. As soon as a few bales of yarn could be made up, they were despatched to his friends, and the prices drawn for. The cash paid in wages, though not amounting to a great sum at the outset, seemed to inspire new life into the moribund streets of the Port; and a gradual brightening up of affairs became visible. Industry began to send forth her sounds, and the hands of the people were observed to slumber much less in their pockets than formerly. Demands were made at the shops for articles which had till now been considered the extravagant luxuries of a capital. Shoes, hitherto unconscious of any menstruum but soot and milk, were now made acquainted with Warren's illustrious polish; and it was whispered that Nicholson, the great brush-maker of Newcastle, had got an order from Rechie Dickson. But the increase of trade was not confined to the town. As the factory added to the number of its hands, so did the demand for articles of rural produce also increase. The farmers in the neighbourhood, no longer compelled to resort to a distant market, brought their meal, barley, and other articles to Port-Marly, where there was a means for disposing of them to advantage. The arrival of ships with flax and other goods naturally increased these facilities of exchange. Rents of houses and patches of land rose in value, and the district was quietly changing its condition from comparative poverty to prosperity. The lands required liming, and there was lime in the country; but this method of agricultural improvement could not be put in practice till coal was imported on a large scale, and now importations of that article took place. Lime-kilns smoked, lands were reclaimed, cottages were reared, money circulated, and all might be traced to the enterprise of Riga Robbie.

Riga Robbie, nevertheless, bore his merits meekly. Pursuing the career he had chalked out, he paid off all his obligations, and extended his business on his own account and responsibilities. Everything seemed to prosper which he took in hand. His factory was vastly increased in size and capabilities, the water-power of the place being brought effectually into play. He likewise purchased a handsome brig, which, in compliment to his youngest daughter, he named the *Joe Janet*. This vessel on one occasion was exposed to a calamity which brought out in a striking manner the energetic character of its owner. In returning from the Baltic laden with timber, the brig sprung a leak after a very trivial gale,

and became water-logged. The crew, after exhausting themselves at the pumps, and fearing the worst, took to their boats, and leaving the vessel to its fate, made to a sloop in the distance. Having a favourable wind, the sloop, with the crew of the brig, soon arrived at a port, and permitted the recreant master of the deserted vessel to set off to report the loss to its owner. The ship being new, Riga Robbie had not insured it; and the master travelled day and night to Port-Marly, which he entered in disguise, in order to induce our friend to insure it before the loss became known. Riga Robbie spurned the dishonest idea; and after rating the master soundly for his pusillanimity, reminding him that as the cargo was timber, the vessel could not possibly have sunk, he asked if the ship had been left under sail, and with her head towards the land. He was answered in the affirmative as to all these particulars. 'And what land would she reach, do you guess?' asked our hero; and was answered, 'Faithly Bay'—a bay at once safe and capacious, though in a dangerous neighbourhood. In half an hour master and owner were in a post-chaise on their way to the spot where it was supposed the vessel might land; and travelling through the night, they reached it at daylight, though distant about forty miles.

The eager owner of the brig was all eyes as he approached the shore, anxious to discover if at least the wreck and cargo of the fine vessel were not visible; but he saw them not, nor had any one heard of them. Wending his way to an old baronial tower perched on an adjoining promontory, here, with glass in hand, he looked out across the main for the remains of his unfortunate vessel. He had not waited long on his lofty station before a sail was seen on the verge of the horizon; it approached, and at last was plainly visible. 'I'm almost certain that is the *Joe Janet*,' said Robbie; 'I know her by her pendant. Take the glass.' The captain, his companion, a good deal disconcerted, took the glass, and at the end of a patient scrutiny, confirmed the belief that it was the *Joe Janet* which was reeling onward, and, as it appeared, in a direction right inshore. 'Let us hasten down to the harbour,' said the agitated owner; 'she may yet be saved from going on the Beething crag.' The pair hurried off to the small harbour, and procuring a boat and pilot, with several stout rowers, they pulled direct for the vessel, now at no great distance. The effort was successful—for how seldom is the ready head and the ready hand otherwise? The *Joe*, the pride of Port-Marly, was safely reached, and safely conducted into harbour. In another half hour she would have gone to pieces on the dangerous reef at the western entrance to the bay.

This astonishing piece of good management being reported all over the country, Riga Robbie was universally considered as one of the most fortunate of men—it was thought that nothing could go wrong in his hands. His good fortune, however, did not save him from the usual fate of persons more prosperous than their neighbours. While benefiting thousands by his enterprise and industry, he was widely envied, and the object of general satire. When he purchased and entered into possession of a mansion in the neighbourhood of Port-Marly, which had belonged to the umquhile and impoverished laird of Birlewary, who had recently died in a drunken fit at the tryst of Balloch, the gentry sneered at his pretensions; and the populace, ever more ready to venerate antiquity than worth, did not fail to echo the cry of upstart. But Riga Robbie was a man of business, and let all such sarcasms buzz themselves to sleep. Nor did they prevent him from pursuing the schemes of improvement which he observed to be desirable for the district. The roads were straightened and put in good order, a weekly market was instituted, a branch bank was settled in the town, a commodious inn was built, a light-house established on the headland near the port, and sundry improvements effected in the educational establishments, all through his interference. It need

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scarcely be hinted that Riga Robbie could not have attained the position he occupied without an auxiliary in his wife and family. In his family relations he was particularly fortunate, and his elegant fireside was for many years one of the happiest in the country.

I entertain so high a regard for the character and memory of Riga Robbie, that I cannot without grief recollect the losses which he endured towards the end of his days. Using common language, he may be said to have been the favourite of fortune up till the period of the great mercantile disasters of 1825, when, by a variety of misfortunes, he was stripped of nearly all that a lifetime of honourable industry had accumulated. After this distressing event he never held up his head. He was a stricken man, yet he was not without the usual consolations of an upright mind, and he was never heard to repine. It was a much greater blow when he lost his wife, the partner alike of his poverty and his wealth, his hopes and his fears. Shortly after this event, he gave up all connexion with business, and bidding adieu to Port-Marly, took up his residence in ———, where two of his sons had already entered on a career worthy of their sire. In this busy manufacturing town he spent a few years amid congenial society; but infirmities coming upon him apace, he removed to the pleasant abode of his younger daughter, now happily married and settled near Pan-nich, and here, in the summer of 1838, did Riga Robbie tranquilly breathe his last on the affectionate bosom of his own 'Joe Janet.'

POPULAR FRENCH SONGS.

NO. III.—THE GASCON.

The inhabitants of the ancient province of Gascony have been accused, from the earliest time, of habits of exaggeration, which have passed them into a proverb. They are the Major Longbows and Baron Munchausens of France; hence a downright falsity, a very gross colouring of the truth, or an outrageous bravado, is called a 'Gasconade.' It is not easy to understand how this characteristic—whether real or imaginary—took its origin: it is, however, certain that the inhabitants of that part of France formerly included in Gascony (comprising those districts which are intersected by the river Garonne), are of a peculiarly vivacious temperament even for Frenchmen; their provincial dialect is full of superlatives, and their conversation is constantly ornamented with stories of marvellous adventures, and of deeds almost supernatural. It is at the same time admitted that the peculiarity is not absolutely confined to one district of France. 'It is said,' remarks De Montfort in the preface to his collection of jests called *Gasconin*, 'that the greatest Gascons do not come from Gascony; and that Gasconades flourish more or less in every country; at all events, the Seine produces quite as many as the Garonne.' La Fontaine goes a little further, and includes the whole of our sex, at a certain stage of existence, in the charge. Speaking of love, he says, 'Every man is a Gascon on that point.'

The Gascon has, for obvious reasons, been always a favourite character on the French stage. He is usually represented as endeavouring to counterbalance the limited gifts of fortune by boasting of his riches. In a comedy called the 'Stream of Oblivion' (*Le Fleuve d'Oubli*), Legrand, a Gascon, demands a hundred bottles of its water for his creditors to drink, that they may forget where to find his door. 'You are perhaps surprised,' he adds to another character, 'to find a Gascon gentleman in debt—that he has been obliged to borrow money?' 'Not at all,' is the reply; 'my great astonishment is, that any person could be so unwise as to lend it to him.'

The great feature of the Gascon is, however, his talent for boasting. In another play, a Gascon is engaged in a desperate encounter with a Norman, but

a bystander separates the combatants. 'If you would only leave me alone,' exclaims the boaster, 'I would pin him up against the wall, and leave nothing at liberty but his arms, that he might take off his hat to me every time I pass.'

A Gascon is not only a boaster; he is often a wit, and the French jest-books are filled with anecdotes of Gasconading. From amongst a host of them we select the following:—Gasconading was a marked characteristic of the court of Henry IV. Though the monarch was not exempt from the fault himself, he grew tired of it in others, and intreated his minister Malherbe to endeavour to reform it all together—to de-Gasconise his court. 'Must I sweep them all away, sire?' asked the minister. 'All,' replied the prince. Upon which Malherbe slyly answered, 'Then I presume your majesty wishes to abdicate.'—Another prince told a Gascon gentleman, who had formerly served him as ambassador, that he looked like an ox. 'I cannot say what I look like,' replied the Gascon, 'but this I know, that I have frequently represented your majesty's person.' A Gascon abbé, who lost a living from the indecent haste of which he was guilty in canvassing for it, declared he had run so fast after the benefice, that he 'outstript, in his flight, his guardian angel.'

The author of the following song is M. P. J. Charrin, one of the founders of the 'Society of Momus,' whose members have, from time to time, contributed some of the best comic songs to the French language. 'The Gascon' is deservedly among the most popular: its drollery lies in this, that the first portion of every stanza contains a bouncer, which the Gascon is obliged to corroborate, or otherwise defend throughout the remainder of the stanza. It is proper to add, that, not to speak of the insurmountable inadequacy of translation, we have been obliged to take some liberties with the text to suit the moral taste of English readers.

THE GASCON.

There are Gascons, I'm told, not a few,
Whose tongues are so glib,
That they fib
Every day;

But, Farbleu,
You may always believe what I say.

I'm a noble of France by descent,
Through an old and illustrious line,
But the title unhappily went
To my uncle the Duke of Gascoine,
Though his fortune is properly mine.
To law I should go, 'twas agreed,
Attorneys and counsel employed;
But in seeking an old title-deed,
I found it by rats quite destroyed!

There are Gascons, &c.

These trifles ne'er trouble me much,
For, thank Fortune, I'm rich as a Jew;
So, my friend, should your fate e'er be such
To require of hundreds a few,
Don't be shy, but demand them—pray, do!
'Accommodate you?' Without doubt,
Though just now I'm unable to lend;
With money I never come out,
But rely on the purse of a friend.

There are Gascons, &c.

Could you see me at home, you would find
That my mansion's a model of taste;
Silk tapestries embroidered and lined,
Dresden vases on built tables placed,
And walls with gilt cornices graced.
But the crowds whom it used to attract,
Have induced me to let it on lease;
And I lodge in a lane—'tis a fact—
For the sake of a month or two's peace.

There are Gascons, &c.

I'd advise you, my friend, not to doubt,
For you know what a fencer I am;
Frovoke me too much, and one bout
Will show I'm by no means a lamb,
And that fighting with me is no sham.
Were my passion not easily ruled,
I should average a victim a-day;
But, insulted, my anger's soon cooled;
I forgive, and walk nimbly away.

There are Gascons, &c.

You're aware, as an author I shine;
 The Académie Royale Française
 Acknowledged my writings were fine,
 To my genius they gave every praise—
 Sublime, they declared, were my lays.
 'Their titles!' Alas! 'twas my fate
 To be robbed of my justly earned fame,
 Himself, a false friend, to elate,
 Stole, and published them under his name.
 There are Gascons, &c.

For composing love-songs, I am blessed
 With a skill to which few can compare,
 My brain is for ever possessed
 With many a beautiful air,
 Joined to couplets exceedingly rare.
 You may judge for yourself when you hear—
 Though the merit I never have sought—
 That as Favart's and Panard's appear,
 The songs I had previously—thought.
 There are Gascons, &c.

'Can I dance?' What a question to ask!
 You will find that at every ball
 In the sunshine of plaudits I bask,
 My minuet steps are quite gall
 To the eyes of both Vestris and Paul.
 'A specimen?' Dire mischance!
 I am lame, you may easily see;
 Last night at the countess's dance,
 I tumbled and damaged my knee.
 There are Gascons, &c.

I am popular, too, 'mongst the fair;
 But a marriage I never have risked;
 Though very large fortunes to share,
 Many excellent matches I've misread—
 I have fifty at least on my list.
 If you ask me for proofs—they're denied,
 There, alas! you will press me too hard;
 For most of the dear ones have died,
 The victims of tender regard.
 There are Gascons, &c.

As a patriot, I glory in arms,
 My country has witnessed my zeal;
 And amidst battle's fiercest alarms,
 My life has been risked for her weal—
 To the honours I've gained I appeal.
 But my crosses and orders to wear,
 My modesty never allows;
 For with envy they make equals stare,
 And inferiors fatigue me with bows.

There are Gascons, I'm told, not a few,
 Whose tongues are so glib,
 That they fib
 Every day;
 But, Parbleu,
 You may always believe what I say.

THE LAST CITATION.

Two criminals were executed at Madrid in 1838, for their ferocious and blood-thirsty conduct during the *emute* of 1835. They perished by the garota, or iron collar, substituted in Spain for the halter—and not only protested their innocence to the very last moment of their lives, but summoned their accusers and judges to appear in judgment with them, within a few days, before the bar of the Great Judge. Yet the guilt of these unhappy criminals was most notorious; the murders for which they suffered had been publicly committed, and the only wonder was, that they should have escaped their just punishment for so long a period as three years.

This bold and pertinacious assertion of their innocence by such undoubted criminals, fills the mind with the most painful emotions. We cannot but shudder at the infatuation which led them to go before their Maker with a lie upon their lips; and we begin to doubt what degree of credit may be due to the last solemn assertions of many who have died for crimes proved against them by only circumstantial evidence. Can it be possible that innocence and guilt, in the same awful situation, with the terrible apparatus of death before them, an un pitying crowd of fellow-men around, with no hope for the future but such as may be founded on the mercy of

their Creator—can the conscience-stricken criminal and the guiltless victim of judicial error, under these terrible circumstances, feel alike—be equally able to call down upon their judges the swift-coming condemnation of the Great Judge? It seems incredible that such things should be; yet a reference to the history of the past affords many instances in which this great problem of our nature remains on record, only to be solved at that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be made known.

Spain was governed, in 1311, by Ferdinand IV., a monarch possessing many excellent qualities, being brave, just, and generous; yet he died in the prime of life under very singular circumstances, arising out of a departure from the love of justice which he had usually evinced. Three noblemen were brought before him charged with having murdered a fourth; they strongly protested their innocence, and affirmed that, if time were given them, they could bring proofs of it; but the king, disregarding their intreaties, ordered them to be thrown from a lofty rock. The unfortunate men continued to make the strongest asseverations of innocence, declaring that the death of the king, within thirty days from that time, would show the truth of their statements, for that they summoned him to come to judgment with them before the throne of heaven. Ferdinand, at this time, was in perfect health; but whether the startling prediction of his victims produced its own fulfilment by affecting his imagination, or whether some other malady attacked him, history does not determine—he died on the last of the thirty days, and hence obtained the surname of Ferdinand the Summoned.

About this period, which abounds in circumstances that show the superstition and intellectual darkness of all classes of people in Europe, the celebrated order of Knights Templars was abolished. This powerful body, half monastic, half military, had acquired a strength and influence which made them hateful to the jealous eyes of the sovereigns of Europe; while, individually, they were feared by the people, who suffered from their vices. Warriors of the cross, they passed freely into court and camp, wherever the nobles of the land were assembled; they were privileged to display all the pomp and circumstance of war—to practise all that was then considered gay, gallant, and refined, or adapted to win the love of dames of high degree; while their vows of celibacy cut them off from all chance of honourable alliance with the objects of their admiration. Many a noble house had been dishonoured by these soldier-priests: many a humble hearth was robbed at once of the innocence of its brightest ornament, and of all, in the shape of wealth, that rapacity could wring from those too powerless to resist. Still, though guilty of ambition and profligacy—the vices of the camp; though convicted of avarice and luxury—the sins of the cloister; these wrought not their downfall: their wealth, as a body, was immense, and greater than their political power; so Pope Clement V., then at Avignon, and Philip the Fair of France (needy prelate and avaricious king), caused all the Knights Templars within their dominions to be seized on the same day, and thrown into secure dungeons. Jacques de Molay, the Grand Master of the order, and several of the best and bravest among them, were accused of sorcery, and other dark crimes against the laws of God and man, which admitted not of proof, and could only be met by solemn denial; some of them, in the agonies of the torture to which they were subjected, confessed to impossible enormities, and were thereupon condemned to die. Not so Jacques de Molay; he appears to have possessed qualities, both physical and mental, that might 'give the world assurance of a man': mingling the martyr's faith with the warrior's pride, he never quailed under the severest torture, but strongly protested not only his own innocence, but that of his order. Even at the last fiery ordeal of fagot and stake, before the cathedral of Notre Dame at Paris, he appeared with unshaken serenity. His deportment was full of majesty, for he had long been the equal com-

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panion of princes; and of calm dignity, for he was conscious of innocence; and he had, withal, a Christian faith whose fervour could not be chilled even in the hour of death. Humbly admitting that he was guilty of the faults of our common nature, he denied the crimes imputed to him, and, committing his spirit to his Maker, he summoned Clement and Philip to appear with him in judgment within a year. They both outlived the period, though Philip died soon after, as to occasion some doubt in the minds of the believers in the marvels, whether his sudden death was not a fulfilment of the Grand Master's prediction.

Charles de Gontault, Baron de Biron, was the friend of Henry IV. of France before that monarch came to the throne, and he continued to be his firm adherent for some time afterwards. Disappointed, however, in some project of ambition, he caballed against his master, and being betrayed by his own valet, was committed to the Bastille. Henry was much attached to this brave chevalier, and intreated him to acknowledge his fault and be forgiven; but either Biron was innocent, and his valet a traitor, or he continued to hope that that person would not ultimately criminate him, and proudly refused to make any concession. When put upon his trial, he was found guilty; but he still trusted to Henry's favour for a pardon: the king, however, was not less offended by his obduracy than by his treason, and signed the warrant for his execution. Nothing could exceed the surprise and despair of Biron when he was informed that he was to die on the following day: he broke out into vehement protestations of innocence, upbraided the king with ingratitude and cruelty, and defied and denounced his accusers and judges, accusing the chancellor who had presided at his trial of unfair dealing, and summoning him to appear in judgment with him within the year. The chancellor, thrice armed in the consciousness of his own uprightness, did not die, but lived five years longer than Biron—until 1617.

The Portuguese in 1640 threw off the yoke of Spain, and nominated John, Duke of Braganza, to the throne. At his death he left two sons, Alphonzo and Pedro, and a daughter, Catherine, who became the unhappy wife of our second Charles. Alphonzo, who was a prince of mean intellect, married a princess of Nemours; she had a good dowry, a handsome person, considerable talents, and few virtues; and they succeeded to the throne. Don Pedro, the younger brother of Alphonzo, was every way his superior; and the shrewd, intriguing, unscrupulous princess of Nemours soon contrived that her husband's imbecility should be so apparent, as to justify his removal from the throne to make room for Don Pedro. Her own divorce then followed, and she artfully demanded back her dowry, well knowing that it was irrevocably squandered; but, as her real object was to become the wife of Don Pedro, she managed to be solicited to marry him, and so to reassume the name and rank of queen. Having carried this point, the guilty pair thought it necessary, for their own security, to have the deposed king and divorced husband closely confined: he submitted without complaint, and with only a momentary ebullition of anger, on hearing that his brother had married his wife. For fifteen years he remained a melancholy captive in the castle of Cintra, the beauties of whose 'glorious Eden' he was not suffered to enjoy. When on the point of death, he said, 'I am going, but the queen will soon follow me to answer before God's awful tribunal for the evils she has heaped upon my head.' She died a few months after him, in 1683; having been more miserable in the gratification of her passions, than her victim could have been in his solitary prison.

The last and most remarkable of these citations is connected with the history of the reigning family of this country; and its details are, perhaps, more touching and romantic than any that have preceded it. George, the electoral prince of Hanover, who afterwards ascended the throne of Great Britain, was married, early in life, to Sophia Dorothea, princess of Halle,

a young lady of great personal beauty and accomplishments. She was the only child of her parents, and had been reared with much tenderness, so that she carried to the court of the elector that unchecked gaiety of heart which so often leads innocent and inexperienced females first into imprudence and then into error. She allowed herself, soon after her arrival, to make some piquant remarks upon the rather coarse and inelegant ladies whom her father-in-law, after the custom of the small German sovereigns, kept openly at his court, and thereby she created enemies, who were ever on the watch to injure and annoy her. Her own conduct was irreproachable, until, in an evil hour, there came to Hanover the young Count Koningsmark, a Swedish nobleman of an ancient and honourable family, who was high in favour at the court of Stockholm. The count, fascinated by the manners of the princess (whose husband was absent with his father's army), paid her the most flattering attentions, which she carelessly, but it is believed innocently, admitted. This afforded the elector an opportunity of accomplishing her ruin. A trap was laid for her, which had the effect of bringing Koningsmark to the neighbourhood of her apartments at an improper hour. The unfortunate Swede was never more seen in life, and Sophia, being arrested, was conveyed without loss of time, and with the concurrence of her deceived husband, to the castle of Ahlen, on the banks of the river Ahlen, where she remained in close confinement thirty-two years.

It is not to be supposed that this incarceration of a young and beautiful woman, the wife of a powerful monarch—for George in time became king of Great Britain—could be an unimportant secret. Their son, the Prince of Wales, who was never on very good terms with his father, was anxious to see her, and twice, at the risk of his life, swam his horse across the river that surrounded the castle where she was confined. There is something very touching in this filial devotion to a mother whom he could scarcely remember to have seen, and who was accused of such grave offences; but the heart of the old German baron who kept the castle was made of such stern stuff, as to be proof against all fine emotions, and the young prince could not obtain an interview with his mother. There was no evidence against her that could justify a divorce; and on one occasion her husband made overtures to her for a reconciliation; but she proudly replied, 'If what I am accused of be true, I am unworthy of him; if the accusation be false, he is unworthy of me; I will not accept his offer.' Immediately before her death, she wrote a letter to him containing an affirmation of her innocence, a reproach for his injustice, and a citation to appear, within a year and a day, at the Divine tribunal for judgment. This letter she confided to an intimate friend, with a solemn charge to see it delivered to the king's own hand; but as this was an undertaking of a delicate, if not a dangerous nature, some months passed by without its being conveyed to him. At length his visit to his electoral dominions seemed to present the desired opportunity, and when he was on his way to Hanover, a messenger met him and delivered the packet to him in his coach. Supposing that it came from Hanover, he opened it directly; but its contents, and the fatal citation with which it ended, had such an effect on him, that he fell into convulsions, which brought on apoplexy and death. He expired at the palace of his brother, the bishop of Osnaburgh, just seven months after his unfortunate wife.

George II., their son, always believed in his mother's innocence, and, had she survived his father, he would have restored her to her rank as queen dowager. Soon after his accession, he visited his electoral dominions, and caused some alterations to be made in the palace. On taking up the floor of his mother's dressing-room, the remains of Count Koningsmark were discovered. It is probable that the unfortunate man was seized and strangled at the moment of his arrest, and that his body was placed under the boards to prevent discovery. The

affair was hushed up, for George was careful of his mother's character; besides which, prudential motives would lead him to desire strict secrecy on this subject. His frequent altercations with his father, in conjunction with the stigma thrown upon his mother, had already given occasion to severe sarcasm and some ribaldry on the part of the Jacobites, and this discovery was not calculated to silence unwelcome insinuations about his parentage. Sophia's story remains on the page of history, a melancholy example of the miseries that may result from the neglect of those minor morals so important to woman. That she was essentially innocent, there is little room to doubt, but if she had also been duly scrupulous to maintain those appearances of purity which are necessary to the perfection of woman's moral status, her whole destiny might have been bright instead of dark; her talents and beauty, instead of being wasted in a prison, might have adorned a palace and added lustre to a crown.

Such is a brief sketch of some of the most famous citations recorded in history. There is matter in them for serious consideration, not as encouraging a superstitious belief in marvels, but as showing the influence of the mind upon the body; a subject of such importance, that the writer gladly leaves it to abler hands.

ASTRONOMY FOR THE MILLION—DICK'S 'SIDEREAL HEAVENS.'

Dr Dick is the author of a series of volumes, in which science is very happily united with moral objects and an enlarged philanthropy. His books, we believe, are even better known in America than in their native country, although there, also, they seem to have obtained an extensive circulation. One of the latest of his productions is *The Sidereal Heavens*, a work designed to convey a popular view of the descriptive department of astronomy, and not unworthy of the attention of the higher class of readers, in as far as it gathers into one focus a considerable number of the most recent observations of the chief astronomers of Europe. A brief review of some of the more novel facts brought out by Dr Dick in this volume, may not prove unacceptable to our readers.

The first thing which must strike, on even a passing glance at the stars, is their apparent difference of size; and they are accordingly classed by astronomers as of the first, second, or third magnitudes (six of these being visible to the eye, and as many as sixteen by the telescope); though the term does not properly signify size, but relative distance and consequent brightness. Sir W. Herschel estimates it thus:—

Light of a star of 1st magnitude,	=	100
... .. 2d	=	25
... .. 3d	=	12
... .. 4th	=	6
... .. 5th	=	2
... .. 6th	=	1

From his own experiments, he found that the light of Sirius, the brightest of all the fixed stars, is about 324 times that of an average star of the sixth magnitude; and Dr Wollaston has estimated it as equal to that of fourteen of our suns.

Now, these are facts, or rather figures, in which we are apt to acquiesce, as we do in the general fact, now placed beyond contradiction, that all the fixed stars are suns, without any very definite conceptions of a matter so far removed beyond human apprehension. But when the former of the two astronomers above-quoted goes on to tell us, that, 'as seen with his forty-feet telescope, the appearance of Sirius announced itself at a great distance, like the dawn of the morning, and came on by degrees, increasing in brightness, till this brilliant

star at length entered the field of the telescope with all the splendour of the rising sun, and forced him to take his eyes off the beautiful sight!—we not only begin to take in that what, at such an enormous distance (20,000,000,000 of miles from our earth) could display the splendour, and produce the dazzling effects of our own sun, is indeed a brother, though infinitely superior luminary; but form some faint conception of what must be the extent of a universe crowded with telescopic stars, unquestionably themselves suns also, whose distances, and the time requisite to traverse the space which separates them from us, Dr Dick thus familiarly illustrates:—'A steam-carriage,' says he, 'setting out from the earth with a velocity of twenty miles per hour, or 486 miles a-day, would require 356,385,460 years to pass from our globe to one of the stars above alluded to. A seraph might wing his flight with the swiftness of light for millions of years through the regions of immensity, and never arrive at a boundary; and we have reason to believe, from what we already know of the Creator and his works, that during the whole course of such an excursion, new objects and new scenes of glory and magnificence would be continually rising to his view. Whether man will ever be permitted to traverse these vast spaces,' says Dr Dick, 'is a question beyond our province to resolve.' But what a field does the bare knowledge of their existence open to the hopes and anticipations of an intelligent and immortal being!

To justify the use of the word 'crowded,' which, as allied with such boundless space, may seem inapplicable, let us turn to our author's interesting particulars of the Milky Way. This well-known object, when traced throughout its different directions, is found to encircle the whole sphere of the heavens, though in some parts of its course broader and more brilliant than in others. It seems to have been known to the ancients exactly as now, and by them poetically considered as a 'pavement of stars;' a conjecture which the telescope has fully confirmed. Ovid says—

"A way there is, in heaven's extended plain,
Which, when the skies are clear, is seen below,
And mortals by the name of 'milky' know;
The groundwork is of stars, through which the road
Lies open to the Thunderer's abode."

And Milton thus characterises it—

"A broad and ample road, whose dust is gold,
And pavement stars, as stars to us appear,
Seen in the galaxy, that milky way
Like to a circling zone, powdered with stars."

The following is a brief summary of Sir W. Herschel's observations on this region of the heavens, with a Newtonian reflecting telescope of twenty feet focal length, and an aperture of eighteen inches:—

'In the most crowded parts of the milky way,' says he, 'I have had fields of view that contained no fewer than 588 stars, and these were continued for many minutes; so that in one quarter of an hour's time there passed not less than 116,000 stars through the field of view of my telescope. Now, the field of view taken in by the telescope was a space less than one-fourth of the apparent size of the moon; and in this narrow field were seen about as many stars as are generally beheld through the whole sky by the naked eye in a clear winter's night. In some parts the stars cluster so thickly, that an average breadth of about five degrees gave 331,000 stars. Were we to suppose every part of the zone equally rich with the space above referred to (about a 61st part of the whole milky way), it will contain no less than 20,191,000 stars. "In short," to use the words of Sir John Herschel, "this remarkable belt, when examined through powerful telescopes, is found (wonderful to relate!) to consist entirely of stars scattered by millions, like glittering dust, on the black ground of the general heavens."

In endeavouring to determine a 'sounding line,' as he calls it, for fathoming the depth of the stratum of stars in the milky way, he seems to prove, by pretty

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conclusive reasoning, that his twenty-foot telescope penetrated to a distance in the profundity of space no less than 497 times the distance of Sirius; so that a stratum of stars of 497 in thickness, each of them as far distant beyond another as Sirius is from our sun, was within the reach of his vision! consequently the most distant stars visible in his telescope must have been at nearly ten thousand *billions* of miles! Of such immense distances we can form nothing approaching to a distinct conception. We can only echo the sentiments of Schnider of Lilienthal, when, with a still more powerful instrument, he had calculated the number of stars visible by it in the milky way at 12,000,000, the sight drew from him the natural exclamation, 'What omnipotence!'

But what shall we say when this milky way, of which our sun is merely a grain of the gold dust, has come to be suspected to be only one of the 3000 similar galaxies, some of them (as that in Orion) incomparably larger than itself, and soluble into distinct stars; while others more distant, yet dimly visible, only require advanced powers in the instrument of vision to yield, according to every analogy, a similar result! The forms of these *nebulae*, as they are called, are endless and varied; but it is a curious fact, that one in particular, and that, too, situate at nearly the remotest point to which our telescopes can carry us, and which its highest powers have as yet failed to resolve into stars, is supposed to bear a more striking resemblance to the system of stars in which our sun is placed than any other object which has yet been described in the heavens. Sir John Herschel describes it as a 'brother system, bearing a real analogy of structure to our own.' It consists of a bright round nucleus, surrounded at a great distance by a nebulous ring, which appears *split* through nearly the greater portion of its circumference, being the precise aspect in which our milky way would present itself to the inhabitant of an equally distant part of this visible region of the Almighty's creation, which we are pleased to designate the 'universe.'

But in whatever part of creation we survey His operations, we uniformly find the character of *variety* impressed upon all his works. The light of the stars generally is greatly diversified, though, on a cursory view of the firmament, they appear nearly of the same aspect. The rays of Sirius, for example, are not only strikingly different from those of Aldebaran, but from those of many other stars which seem to bear a nearer resemblance. In tropical climates, where the sky is clearer than with us, and almost of a dark ebony colour, the difference is more perceptible. In this respect, as well as others, it is true that 'one star differeth from another in glory.'

But the phenomena of double stars do not seem to have been much attended to, till Sir William Herschel commenced his extensive observations. From some six or eight of these stars, known to a preceding age, that indefatigable observer, and his no less distinguished son, have risen to a distinct list of 3300 double and triple stars from their own solitary observations, which, added to a catalogue by the celebrated Struve of Dorpat of no less than 3000 (to determine which he had to examine minutely 120,000 stars), makes the total number known exceed 6000. To some minds, not accustomed to deep reflection, it may appear a very trivial fact, that a small and scarcely distinguishable point of light adjacent to a larger star should revolve around its larger attendant; but this phenomenon, minute and trivial as it may at first sight appear, proclaims the astonishing fact, that suns revolve around suns, and systems around systems. Prodigious reflection!—that sun should revolve round sun, with all its planetary systems along with it, and the probable distance between them 200,000 millions of miles!

It was predicted, so early as 1783, that probably some day the periods of these revolutions might be discovered; which is now fully realised, and no longer subject of conjecture. More than fifty instances of change of re-

lative position in the two stars have been sufficiently observed to ascertain the fact of circular progressive motion, completed in some cases in a period of 43 years, in others of 342, while some must require 12 or 1600 years. 'On the whole,' says Sir John Herschel, 'we have the same evidence of their rotations about each other, as we have of those of Uranus and Saturn about the sun.'

There is another interesting view which may be taken of these binary systems, as they are called, and *that is the contrast of colours* which some of the stars composing them exhibit. 'Many of the double stars,' says Sir John Herschel, 'exhibit the beautiful and curious phenomena of contrasted or complimentary colours. In such instances the larger star is usually of a ruddy or orange hue, while the smaller one appears blue or green; and it may be easier suggested in words than conceived in imagination, what *variety* of illumination *two suns*, a red and a green, or a yellow and a blue, must afford a planet circulating about either; and what charming contrasts and "grateful vicissitudes" a red and green day, for instance, alternating with a white one, might arise from the presence or absence of one or other above the horizon. Insulated stars, of a red colour almost as deep as that of blood, occur in many parts of the heavens; but no green or blue star (of any decided hue) has, we believe, ever been noticed, unassociated with a companion brighter than itself.'

But wonderful as we have seen *binary* systems to be, triple, quadruple, and multiple stars are now also ascertained to form connected systems. What an idea of the order of creation and intelligence of the Creator does this complexity, yet harmony of motions and orbits, give rise to! Millions of bodies, all in regular yet connected motion, pursuing their way without confusion or collision, in spite of the (by man) incalculable disturbing forces of the bodies among which they circulate! What a daily and hourly attestation to the omniscience of Him who first impressed them with their motions and velocities, and by whom, at a glance, all their perturbations were foreseen and provided for!

Hitherto, we have spoken chiefly of the hundreds and millions of heavenly bodies which the progress of science has unfolded to the astronomer's view. But there are stars, 'few and far between,' indeed, which have blazed conspicuously in our firmament but to disappear from it; whether permanently or not, remains to be seen. The following is Dr Dick's account of the most remarkable among them:—

'In the beginning of November 1572, a new star appeared in Cassiopeia, whose appearance was sudden and brilliant, and its phenomena so striking, as to determine the celebrated Tycho Brahe to become an astronomer. Returning about ten to his laboratory, he came to a crowd of country people staring at something behind him, and looking round, he beheld this wonderful object. It was so bright, that his staff cast a shadow; of a dazzling white, with a little of a bluish tinge. It had no hair or tail around it similar to comets, but shone with the same kind of lustre as the other fixed stars. Its brilliancy was so great as to surpass that of Lyra and Sirius. It appeared larger than Jupiter in its nearest approach to the earth; and was seen, by those who had good eyes, at noonday.

In this state it continued to shine, with undiminished brilliancy, during the remaining part of November, or more than three weeks. It gradually diminished, through December, to the size of Jupiter. In January, February, and March 1573, it appeared about a star of the first magnitude, gradually decreasing in brightness, till, about October, it was only equal to one of the fourth, and in January and February 1574, to the fifth and sixth magnitude. In spring 1573, it grew reddish like Mars; in the month of May that year, pale and livid, like Saturn; and, after sixteen months, it finally disappeared in March 1574.'

'It is impossible,' says Mrs Somerville, when alluding to this star of 1572, 'to imagine anything more tremen-

dous than a conflagration that could be visible at such a distance.' Whether there were anything in the state of the body alluded to, similar to what we call a conflagration, may be justly doubted; but there was a splendour and luminosity concentrated in that point of the heavens where the star appeared, which would more than equal the blaze of twelve millions of worlds such as ours, were they all collected in one mass, and all at once wrapt in flames.

The supposition of these stars being suns destroyed by combustion, has been favoured by La Place, Professor Vince, M. Mason Good, and the late Professor Robison of Edinburgh, who asks, 'What has become of that dazzling star, surpassing Venus in brightness, which shone out all at once in November 1572?'

Another star, almost similar in brightness, appeared in September 1604, and shone, gradually diminishing, till some time between October 1605 and the following February. The theory of Dr Dick on the subject seems to be, that these are not worlds in combustion, but huge bodies approaching our system in vastly elliptical orbits at fixed periods, and receding in the same manner. As similar phenomena appeared in the same place (Cassiopeia) in 934 and 1264, a period of about 319 years, he supposes this might be the same; and if so, its next return would be about 1891 or 1892. Should this prove the case, astronomers will now have a better opportunity of marking its aspects and revolutions, and determining its size and period.

'Whatever view,' he says, 'we may be led to take of such events, we behold a display of magnitude, of motion, and of magnificence, which overpowers the human faculties, and shows us the littleness of man, and the limited nature of his powers; and which ought to inspire us with reverence for that Almighty Being who sits on the throne of the universe, describing all its movements for the accomplishment of His wise and righteous designs, and for the diffusion of universal happiness throughout all ranks of intelligent existences. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? In the heights of heaven he doth great things past finding out, yea, and wonders without number. By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens. The pillars thereof tremble, and are astonished at his reproof. Lo! these are but parts of his ways; but the thunder of his power who can understand?"'

ACCIDENTS IN MINES.

We can scarcely turn up a newspaper which does not record some mining accident. Indeed, combining the great mining districts of this island, it may be safely stated that broken limbs and loss of life are of almost every-day occurrence, involving a vast amount of individual suffering and family deprivation. There is now before us a list of accidents, gleaned from the pages of the *Mining Journal*, for a period of eight months, by which it appears 301 individuals have lost their lives, and 182 received severe and permanent injuries. According to parliamentary report, the annual loss of life in the Bromwich, Tipton, Dudley, and Wolverhampton district, amounts to 110; and it is stated by the Midland Mining Commission, that out of 1122 deaths of colliers, not fewer than 610 arose from accidents. All this points to a fearful amount of individual suffering, as well as national loss; and yet we believe nine-tenths of these calamities are never known beyond the locality in which they occur. In fact, the best authorities allow that scarcely a fifth of the accidents which happen in connexion with mining operations is recorded in the newspapers, and, proceeding upon this estimate, they calculate that 2500 lives are annually lost to Britain through this cause alone! Occasionally, the public is startled by some dreadful explosion in the collieries of Newcastle or Whitehaven; but such accidents, however distressing, create but a small portion of the total loss; falls of the roof, choke-damp, bursting of old water-

wastes, breaking of apparatus in descending the pit, and other minor causes, insensibly increasing the mortality to its present alarming extent. Such being the facts, the question occurs—Can anything be done to lessen the evil?

Since the better construction of our roads, and the more careful management arising from public competition, stage-coach accidents seldom or ever occur. Experience, public opinion acting upon the pecuniary interests of companies, and legal enactments, have already produced a salutary diminution in railway casualties; and the same influences will also in time diminish the dangers of steam-navigation. In these cases the remedy has been effected by the public taking care of itself on the one hand, and companies looking after their pecuniary interests on the other. But the miner is obscure and comparatively helpless; on his side is dependence for bread, on the side of his master are power and authority. Unless, therefore, a benevolence akin to that which has prevented the employment, in mines, of females, and of children under ten years of age, takes part with the miner, the perils of his occupation run little chance of being speedily abolished. Presuming that such a benevolence were to interfere, nay, that the state were to legislate for its own protection—for the annual loss of so many lives entails a heavy burden upon the community—we see no inherent difficulties in the occupation of a miner which should render it more liable to accident than many other so-called 'hazardous' employments. We have only to glance at the causes of the accidents recorded, to be convinced that their removal or mitigation is within the power of human ingenuity and caution.

Upon investigation, it appears that explosion of fire-damp, choke-damp, falling of the roof, breaking of the rope or other apparatus in descent, fall of stones down the pit, and bursting of water from old wastes, are the chief causes of accident; and none of these appear to present any insurmountable obstacles to its removal or mitigation. In the first place, many of such casualties arise from carelessness or ignorance on the part of the workmen themselves, and might be prevented by the employment of an accredited agent to whom the entire safety-regulation of the mine should be intrusted. Where such overseers are employed, accidents seldom take place; the proper working of the engines, the ropes, ventilation, and locking of the safety-lamps, being the objects of their daily inspection. But even the strictest human vigilance is fallible; and in a matter of such momentous importance as the removal of fire-damp and choke-damp, there ought to be some arrangements of a peculiarly careful nature. Presuming that the most approved safety-lamps are supplied to the miner, the great currents of ventilation ought to be regulated from above, and in connexion with the never-failing source of the atmosphere. Fire-damp is light, and will ascend wherever an egress is afforded it; and choke-damp can always be driven from its lurking places by a superior current of pure air. To the former, an escape can be readily afforded by open shafts or by the boring rod; and where such ventilation exists, in connexion with rarefaction by fire, or with currents produced by the steam-engine, choke-damp must disappear. Falls of the roof should be of rare occurrence where props are liberally supplied, and where an avaricious system of 'harrying' (removing all the coal-supports for the sake of the mineral) is not adopted; and the breaking of the rope and other apparatus in descents would perhaps never happen, were these daily inspected, and properly secured at night from malicious damage. In fine, few of those causes which so frequently prove fatal in mines are beyond human control, if proper means were taken for their removal; but these means, we fear, will continue to be neglected, or at best be but imperfectly applied, till legislative enactment compel their adoption. Depending, as Britain does, for so much of her wealth and comfort upon her mineral resources, it is far from creditable that the lives of her miners should continue to be

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exposed to such hazards, whether from their own ignorance, or from the neglect and avarice of their masters. Considerations of self-interest, as well as of humanity, should prompt to this endeavour; for an annual loss of 2500 lives cannot take place without materially adding to the liabilities of an already overburdened community.

THE WEATHER FORETOLD BY OBSERVING THE HABITS OF A SPIDER.

Quatremer Disjonval, a Frenchman by birth, was adjutant-general in Holland, and took an active part on the side of the Dutch patriots when they revolted against the Stadtholder. On the arrival of the Prussian army, under the Duke of Brunswick, he was immediately taken, tried, and having been condemned to twenty-five years' imprisonment, was incarcerated in a dungeon at Utrecht, where he remained eight years. Spiders, which are the constant, and frequently the sole companions of the unhappy inmates of such places, were almost the only living objects which Disjonval saw in the prison of Utrecht. Partly to beguile the tedious monotony of his life, and partly from a taste which he had imbibed for natural history, he began to seek employment, and eventually found amusement in watching the habits and movements of his tiny fellow-prisoners. He soon remarked that certain actions of the spiders were intimately connected with approaching changes in the weather. A violent pain on one side of his head, to which he was subject at such times, had first drawn his attention to the connexion between such changes and corresponding movements among the spiders. For instance, he remarked that those spiders which spun a large web in a wheel-like form, invariably withdrew from his cell when he had his bad headache; and that these two signs, namely, the pain in his head, and the disappearance of the spiders, were as invariably followed by very severe weather. So often as his headache attacked him, so regularly did the spiders disappear, and then rain and north-east winds prevailed for several days. As the spiders began to show themselves again in their webs, and display their usual activity, so did his pains gradually leave him until he got well and the fine weather returned. Further observations confirmed him in believing these spiders to be in the highest degree sensitive of approaching changes in the atmosphere, and that their retirement and reappearance, their weaving and general habits, were so intimately connected with changes in the weather, that he concluded they were of all things best fitted to give accurate intimation when severe weather might be expected. In short, Disjonval pursued these inquiries and observations with so much industry and intelligence, that by remarking the habits of his spiders, he was at length enabled to prognosticate the approach of severe weather from ten to fourteen days before it set in, which is proved by the following fact, which led to his release.

When the troops of the French republic overran Holland in the winter of 1794, and kept pushing forward over the ice, a sudden and unexpected thaw, in the early part of the month of December, threatened the destruction of the whole army unless it was instantly withdrawn. The French generals were thinking seriously of accepting a sum offered by the Dutch, and withdrawing their troops, when Disjonval, who hoped that the success of the republican army might lead to his release, used every exertion, and at length succeeded in getting a letter conveyed to the French general in January 1795, in which he pledged himself, from the peculiar actions of the spiders, of whose movements he was now enabled to judge with perfect accuracy, that within fourteen days there would commence a most severe frost, which would make the French masters of all the rivers, and afford them sufficient time to complete and make sure of the conquest they had commenced, before it should be followed by a thaw. The commander of the French forces believed his prognostication, and persevered. The cold weather, which Disjonval had announced, made its appearance in twelve days, and with such intensity, that the ice over the rivers and canals became capable of bearing the heaviest artillery. On the 28th January 1795, the French army entered Utrecht in triumph; and Quatremer Disjonval, who had watched the habits of his spiders with so much intelligence and success, was, as a reward for his ingenuity, released from prison.—*Foreign Quarterly Review for January.*

ENCOURAGING HINTS.

Don't be discouraged, if in the outset of life things do not go on smoothly. It seldom happens that the hopes we cherish for the future are realised. The path of life appears smooth and level; but when we come to travel it, we find it all up hill, and generally rough enough. The journey is a laborious one; and, whether poor or wealthy, high or low, we shall find it to our disappointment, if we have built on any other calculation. To endure it with as much cheerfulness as possible, and to elbow our way through the great crowd, 'hoping for little, yet striving for much,' is perhaps the best plan. Don't be discouraged, if occasionally you slip down by the way, and your neighbour treads over you a little; or, in other words, don't let a failure or two dishearten you. Accidents will happen, miscalculations will sometimes be made; things will turn out differently from our expectations, and we may be sufferers. It is worth while to remember, that fortune is like the skies in April, sometimes clear and favourable; and as it would be folly to despair of again seeing the sun, because to-day is stormy, so it is unwise to sink into despondency when fortune frowns, since, in the common course of things, she may surely be expected to smile and smile again. Don't be discouraged if you are deceived in the people of the world; they are rotten at the core. From such sources as these you may be more unexpectedly deceived, and you will naturally feel sore under such deceptions; but to these you may become used: if you fare as other people do, they will lose their novelty before you grow gray, and you will learn to trust more cautiously, and examine their character closely, before you allow great opportunities to injure you. Don't be discouraged under any circumstances. Go steadily forward. Rather consult your own conscience than the opinion of men, though the latter is not to be disregarded. Be industrious, be sober, be honest; dealing in perfect kindness with all who come in your way, exercising a neighbourly and obliging spirit in your whole intercourse; and if you do not prosper as rapidly now as some of your neighbours, depend upon it you will be at least as happy.—*Newspaper paragraph.*

WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

The recent accounts from this colony, which are dated to the 15th August, appear to give indications of a spirit of enterprise having sprung up among the settlers. It is very evident that the first step for the advancement of a new colony must be the establishment of an export trade. No country can flourish which is drained of its specie in payment for imported articles; and therefore, to produce sufficient for its own use, is the most effectual means to prevent the emission of capital, while the production of more than sufficient, which must lead to exportation, will in its turn introduce additional capital. The Western Australians appear to be following this line of policy, and throughout the colony an anxiety seems to prevail to discover exportable commodities, and turn them to advantage. Besides the staple articles of wool, oil, and whalebone, the list of Western Australian exports is likely soon to receive additions in those of wine, live stock, potatoes, timber, flax, and olive-oil; and labour only is wanted to enable the colonists to ship these articles to the neighbouring colonies, and even to England, to an extent which cannot fail greatly to advance the prosperity of their settlement. The governor's speech at the opening of the council on the 21st June last, reports good progress. He alludes to the general state of affairs, and congratulates the council on the solvent condition of their colony, as compared with that of the other Australian settlements. He deprecates the high price of labour; but hopes that some means may be devised for the introduction of immigrants, and urges the colonists to turn every attention to exportation. A long discussion subsequently occurred in the council on the motion of one of its members for the repeal of an act prohibiting distillation in the colony, as it was now thought that the manufacture of brandy, under certain restrictions, would benefit the community. The permission, however, was deferred until vineyard cultivation shall have reached a more advanced stage. The reports of the Western Australian, the Agricultural, and the Vineyard Societies, were very satisfactory; and that of the Western Australian Bank showed that its affairs were prosperous. The new church at Fremantle had been opened with a very interesting ceremony, and several other public works of great importance were rapidly approaching completion. On the whole, the advices from this quarter are pleasing, and indicate an exemption

from the depression so generally felt by the neighbouring colonies, and a gradual progress, retarded by the absence of labour, and consequent high rate of wages, but yet steady and prosperous.

INSTINCT OF THE ANT-LION.

Among the instincts which direct animals in the acquirement of their food, few are more remarkable than those possessed by the larva of the ant-lion, a small insect allied to the dragon-fly. This animal is destined to feed upon ants and other small insects, whose juices it sucks; but it moves slowly, and with difficulty, so that it could scarcely have obtained the requisite supply of food, if nature had not guided it in the construction of a remarkable snare, which entraps the prey it could not acquire by pursuit. It digs in fine sand a little funnel-shaped pit, and conceals itself at the bottom of this until an insect falls over its edge; and if its victim seeks to escape, or stops in its fall to the bottom, it throws over it, by means of its head and mandibles, a quantity of sand, by which the insect is caused to roll down the steep, within reach of its captor. The manner in which the ant-lion digs this pit is extremely curious. After having examined the spot where it purposes to establish itself, it traces a circle of the dimensions of the mouth of its pit, then placing itself within this line, and making use of one of its legs as a spade, it digs out a quantity of sand, which it heaps upon its head, and then, by a sudden jerk, throws this some inches beyond its circle. In this manner it digs a trench, which serves as the border of its intended excavation, moving backwards along the circle until it comes to the same point again; it then changes sides, and moves in the contrary direction, and so continues until its work is completed. If, in the course of its labours, it meets with a little stone, the presence of which would injure the perfection of its snare, it neglects it at first, but returns to it after finishing the rest of its work, and uses all its efforts to get it upon its back, and carry it out of its excavation; but if it cannot succeed in this, it abandons its work, and commences anew elsewhere. When the pit is completed, it is usually about thirty inches in diameter by twenty in depth; and when the inclination of its walls has been altered by any slip, as almost always happens when an insect has fallen in, the ant-lion hastens to repair the damage.—*Carpenter's Animal Physiology—Popular Cyclopædia of Natural Science.*

HOW TO CLEAN A FOWLING-PIECE.

Sir Astley Cooper seemed to be imately philosophically disposed, and always had some object of practical utility in view. In his scientific inquiries, he had remarkable facility of applying his knowledge to the daily concerns of life, and delighted in suggesting improvements for matters which might almost appear too trifling to attract his notice. I remember upon one occasion saying in his hearing, 'I must send my gun to town to have it cleaned, for it has become so much loaded that it is unfit for use.' 'Pooh!' said he; 'send it to London! there is not the least occasion for it. Keep a few ounces of quicksilver in the gun-case, and then you can easily unlead your gun yourself. Stop up the touch-holes by means of a little wax, and then, pouring the quicksilver into the barrels, roll it along them for a few minutes. The mercury and the lead will form an amalgam, and leave the gun as clean as the first day it came out of the shop. You have then only to strain the quicksilver through a piece of thin wash-leather, and it is again fit for use, for the lead will be left in the strainer.' I have since adopted this plan, and with perfect success.—*Life of Sir Astley Cooper.*

HONG KONG.

The island of Hong Kong, lately added to our possessions by the Chinese treaty, is comparatively a small patch of land, deriving its main importance from the facilities afforded by its situation. It is from four to five miles in width, and is traversed by a range of granitic hills from 500 to upwards of 1000 feet in height. The climate is not essentially different from that of Macao, on the mainland of China; and there is abundance of good water at all times of the year. The soil is decomposed granite; and there are about 300 acres under cultivation, chiefly rice. The vegetable productions are mangoes, lichees, langans, oranges, and pears; rice, sweet potatoes, yams, and a small quantity of flax. The animals are deer, armadillo, land-tortoise, and snakes, not known to be venomous; and a quantity of fish are captured and cured at the village of

Chick-choo. As a station, it is reported to be by no means healthy. The most prevalent diseases are intermittent and remittent fevers; and dysentery is common throughout the year, particularly after sudden changes of weather. The natives suffer from these complaints as well as Europeans.

EXPORT EXTRAORDINARY.

There is an export house whose establishment is in Manchester, which, from the magnitude of its business, is perhaps unparalleled—that is, in the same business—namely, exporters of cotton twist and piece-goods. The firm referred to is known to pack no fewer than 25,000 to 30,000 bales per annum, each pack weighing half a ton; this latter quantity gives 82 bales a day, equal to 41 tons, or 287 tons weekly—or nearly 15,000 tons a year. The carriage or freight paid by this house is really astounding. The present charge to Hull is L.2 per ton, and which, at this rate, amounts to L.500 per week, presuming that the bales take this route, which, no doubt, nine-tenths of them do. The annual payment on this head will therefore be within a fraction of L.30,000. The statement will no doubt cause much surprise, but there is every reason to believe that it is based on facts.—*Leeds Mercury.*

SUBMARINE PLOUGH.

A submarine plough for removing sand-banks in shallow waters is said to have been constructed by Dr Eddy of Cincinnati, somewhat on the principle of the Archimedes screw, boring up the sand at one end, and passing it through the screw to be discharged at the other extremity.

FOOTSTEPS OF ANGELS.

When the hours of day are numbered,
And the voices of the night
Wake the better soul, that slumbered,
To a holy, calm delight;

Ere the evening lamps are lighted,
And, like phantoms grim and tall,
Shadows from the stiffl fire-light
Dance upon the parlour wall;

Then the forms of the departed
Enter at the open door;
The beloved, the true hearted,
Come to visit me once more:

He, the young and strong, who cherished
Noble longings for the strife,
By the roadside fell and perished,
Weary with the march of life!

They, the holy ones and weakly,
Who the cross of suffering bore,
Folded their pale hands so meekly,
Spoke with us on earth no more!

And with them, the being bauteous
Who unto my youth was given me,
More than all things else to love me,
And is now a saint in heaven.

With a slow and noiseless footstep
Comes that messenger divine;
Takes the vacant chair beside me,
Lays her gentle hand in mine.

And she sits and gazes at me
With those deep and tender eyes,
Like the stars, so still and saint-like,
Looking downward from the skies.

Uttered not, yet comprehended,
Is the spirit's voiceless prayer,
Soft rebukes, in blessings ended,
Breathing from her lips of air.

O, though oft depressed and lonely,
All my fears are laid aside,
If I but remember only
Such as these have lived and died!

—*Longfellow's Poems (American).*

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